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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002136

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SUBJECT: MEETING WITH NEW MINISTER OF INTERIOR, JAWAD
AL-BOLANI

REF: BAGHDAD 1960

Classified By: Rule of Law Coordinator James Yellin for Reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) On June 18, EmbOffs met with the new Minister of Interior, Jawad al-Bolani, to congratulate him on his appointment and to pledge ongoing U.S. support for the ministry's efforts to combat terrorism and criminality. EmbOffs emphasized the importance of enhancing public confidence in the ministry and its forces. Bolani agreed and added that his priorities for the ministry include promoting respect for human rights, eliminating "bad" elements from the ministry, and gaining the confidence of all Iraqis. END SUMMARY.

ROL COORDINATOR'S REMARKS

12. (C) On June 18, PolOff, PolMilOff, and ROL Coordinator met with the new Minister of Interior, Jawad al-Bolani. After exchanging greetings, ROL Coordinator said that:

-- The U.S. recognizes al-Bolani has assumed heavy responsibilities and will support his efforts to combat terrorism and criminality and help establish security for all Iraqis.

-- We agree with the Prime Minister that the Minister of Interior must be above sectarian politics and act in a way that inspires the confidence of all Iraqis, regardless of ethnic group or sect.

13. (C) ROL Coordinator said that some of the most important things al-Bolani can do to enhance public confidence in the ministry are to:

-- Punish in accordance with the law members of the ministry and its forces who commit or order violations of law, including human rights abuses and corruption;

-- Eradicate militia influence within the ministry by removing personnel who belong to or owe allegiance to any militia;

-- Delete from the ministry payroll ghost employees and people with criminal records; and,

-- Treat Ministry of Interior detainees humanely, prepare an accurate census of the detainees, and facilitate the work of investigative judges.

BOLANI'S REPLY

14. (C) Al-Bolani said that the ministry has a long way to go to gain the confidence of Iraq's many different groups. He

added that his priorities are to:

-- Fight terrorism;

-- Promote respect for human rights;

-- Gain the confidence of all Iraqis by reassuring them that the ministry seeks to promote the country's collective interests; and

-- Eradicate the influence of "bad" elements from the ministry.

¶5. (C) When ROL Coordinator asked what he meant by "bad" elements, al-Bolani said supporters of the former regime, corrupt officials, and militia sympathizers. When asked which militias have supporters within the ministry, al-Bolani avoided providing specifics, saying that some police in Ramadi have links to Sunni extremist groups and that some police in Basra have ties to local militias.

¶6. (C) Al-Bolani said that he plans to work primarily from the main MOI building in the red zone rather than from Adnan Palace in the International Zone, stating that there is a difference between a minister who works among his employees at the ministry and one who works from the safety of Adnan Palace. (COMMENT: This was an implicit swipe at former Minister of Interior Baqir Jabr, who worked out of Adnan Palace and rarely visited the main MOI building. END COMMENT.)

DETAINEE ISSUES

¶7. (C) Regarding detainee issues, al-Bolani said that:

BAGHDAD 00002136 002 OF 002

-- At his request the Prime Minister recently agreed to form a committee composed of representatives from the MOI, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defense, and Higher Juridical Council to investigate conditions at Iraqi detention facilities and prisons.

-- He expects a statement within a week or two from the Prime Minister ordering the transfer of all detainees in Iraqi custody and all Iraqi detention centers to MOJ control.

ABUSE AT DETENTION FACILITIES

¶8. (C) In response to our questions, Bolani said that he has formed an investigative committee headed by the MOI inspector general to investigate human rights abuses at Site 4. He added that the transfer of MOI detainees from Site 4 to a Baghdad facility called Baladiyat is underway.

¶9. (C) By way of background, Site 4 is an MOI detention facility in Baghdad where a joint U.S.-Iraqi team found cramped, squalid conditions and detainees who had been severely abused (see reftel). At U.S. urging, the Iraqis have agreed to transfer the adult detainees from MOI custody to MOJ custody at a Baghdad facility called Baladiyat. The juvenile detainees, some of whom complained of sexual abuse, are being screened for transfer to a juvenile detention facility.

¶10. (C) ROL Coordinator noted that some MOI personnel implicated in human rights abuses at the MOI detention facility known as the Bunker continue to work at the ministry, including Bashir al-Wandi, aka Engineer Ahmad. Bolani said that if we would provide full names and positions of such people he would investigate. We promised to provide him with names.

COMMENTS

¶11. (C) Bolani made a favorable first impression. He said

the right things regarding protecting the interests of all Iraqis, eradicating militia influence within the ministry, and protecting human rights. We will monitor closely, however, whether he makes progress in dealing with these problems.

¶12. (C) We agree that it is better from a leadership and managerial perspective for Bolani to work from the ministry rather than from Adnan Palace in the green zone, but the security risks are high. He will face additional risks if he confronts malefactors in the ministry and its forces.

SPECKHARD